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MEDIA RELEASE

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UM CHEMISTS HELP IMPROVE PILOT SAFETY

MISSOULA--

U.S. Air Force pilots who fly in combat may be a little safer thanks to two University of Montana faculty members.

Forrest D. Thomas, professor of chemistry, and Edward J. Keller, a chemistry lecturer, recently taught a short course on handloading small arms ammunition at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

The Wright-Patterson Base is the only place in the country where the effects of foreign ammunition are tested on U.S. planes and equipment, Keller said. The purpose of the course was to train personnel to reload foreign ammunition from various types of weapons, from rifles to anti-aircraft guns, so the cartridge cases can be reused during testing.

It is necessary to continuously test the effectiveness of foreign ammunition because all countries have their own procedures for manufacturing arms, Thomas said, and the destructive power of ammunition is constantly being upgraded.

"The point is to try to increase the survivability of our pilots," Keller said. U.S. engineers will redesign equipment that tests show can be severely damaged by gunfire, he said.

Thomas and Keller have taught courses on handloading ammunition in Missoula for the past 10 years. They recently had an article published in Handloader magazine which led to their contract with the Air Force.

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